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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Secretary Gates to Israel, April 18-19, 2007
- [1](#)2. Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post prominently covered the visit of

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates to Israel. Yediot and Maariv did not report on the first day of the Secretary's visit. The media reported that on Wednesday Gates held two meetings with Defense Minister Amir Peretz, one in a large forum. The Jerusalem Post reported that last night Secretary Gates attended a reception hosted by US Ambassador to Israel Richard Jones. The Secretary is scheduled to meet today with PM Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

Leading media reported that the meeting between Gates and Peretz focused on a number of issues: the Iranian threat, the implications of the ongoing fighting in Iraq, the recent Syrian statements that were hostile to Israel, and the defense ties between the US and Israel.

In their top stories, Ha'aretz and Hamodi'a quoted Gates as saying during his meeting with Peretz that diplomatic efforts to resolve the standoff with Iran over its nuclear program are working. Ha'aretz quoted Peretz as telling reporters during a joint press conference with Gates that "2007 will be a critical year for thwarting the Iranian plans." "Iran presents a threat not only to Israel, but to the entire free world," Ha'aretz quoted Peretz as saying. "This problem is of concern to all of us and we are certain that the world will not stand aside." "We expect that the U.S. and the world will stand by us regarding the Iranian nuclear issue," he added. "I congratulate the U.S. on the Security Council decision regarding sanctions." Ha'aretz wrote that, while Peretz welcomed the diplomatic efforts, the Defense Minister said Israel could not rule out using other options. Ha'aretz appended to its lead story an Associated Press report citing an International Atomic Energy Agency document that Iran has started feeding small amounts of uranium gas into centrifuges that can enrich it to weapons-grade level and is already running more than 1,300 of the machines. This was also reported in Maariv.

Ha'aretz wrote that Secretary Gates criticized Syria's policies and positions. "While we have diplomatic relations with Syria, that does not mean that we are happy with what they are doing," he was quoted as saying. Ha'aretz said that Gates expressed concern over ongoing weapons transfers from Syria to Hizbullah, as well as the fact that Syria is not preventing militants from crossing into Iraq. This issue was highlighted by Hatzofe. Ha'aretz said that the defense secretary refused to respond to questions on how the US views the

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results of the Second Lebanon War, and whether the US administration was disappointed by the IDF's performance during the war.

"Fortunately for me, I was not the secretary of defense last summer, and I therefore exempted from answering," Ha'aretz quoted Gates as saying.

In its lead story, The Jerusalem Post reported that Defense Ministry officials walked away slightly disappointed from a round of meetings with Secretary Gates on Wednesday night, saying he refused to discuss non-diplomatic options on the Iranian nuclear threat. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials who participated in the meeting with Gates as saying that Gates came to Israel more to "listen then to be heard." The Jerusalem Post quoted an Israeli official as saying: "The US is busy formulating its strategy regarding Iraq and he wanted to hear how we understood the instability there and how it would affect us." The official added that the assumption within the Israeli defense establishment was that US armed forces would pull out of Iraq unilaterally and in one

wave, not gradually.

Yediot reported that Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz will head the Israeli delegation in the Israel-US strategic dialogue that will take place in Washington early next month. The newspaper said that the Israeli delegation will include officials from the Defense Ministry, the Mossad, the Foreign Ministry, and the IDF, and that Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns will lead the American delegation.

The media reported on the beginning of talks between Israel and the Arab League. Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday the Arab League committee entrusted with implementing the Arab initiative of peace with Israel decided that Egypt and Jordan will spearhead efforts to

market the scheme. The League conditioned negotiations with Israel on the cessation of construction in the settlements. Ha'aretz wrote that on Wednesday that Olmert spoke by phone with King Abdullah II of Jordan on promoting the Arab peace initiative. Leading media reported that Olmert told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the diplomatic process with the Palestinians would be based on the Roadmap and direct negotiations. He was quoted as saying that the Arab League's initiative could provide the "envelope" for the process. Olmert also told the committee that the U.S. had tried to promote a regional conference with the participation of the international Quartet, the Arab Quartet -- Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates -- Israel and the PA. However, the attempt failed "and not because of us." He was also quoted as saying that the Arab League was considering sending a delegation to Israel. Yediot wrote that the League will soon dispatch to Israel a delegation of Egyptian and Jordanian diplomats, headed by the foreign ministers of the two countries. It is expected to arrive towards the end of next week in Israel. Yediot reported that Olmert's senior aide Yoram Turbowicz will soon hold talks in Washington about the Arab peace initiative.

Yediot and Hatzofe reported that on Wednesday, during his appearance before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, PM Olmert related to a possible deal with Hamas and stressed that Israel cannot pay the price that IDF Cpl. Gilad Shalit's kidnappers are demanding in return for his release. Olmert was quoted as saying that Israel had received from Egypt a list of Hamas's demands for a prisoner release. He added: "The list is disappointing because it creates expectations that we have no possibility of meeting. Gilad Shalit's release would make us all feel good, but it is our duty to also act in our interests and not to act out of emotion." Leading media also quoted Olmert as saying that, despite Syrian President Bashar Assad's declaration that his country was ready was ready for a war for Israel, the latter has "no intention" of attacking Syria.

Ha'aretz printed a Reuters story quoting PA Finance Minister Salam Fayyad as saying -- in interviews with Palestinian newspapers published on Wednesday after meetings in Washington with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior Bush administration officials -- that he was hopeful the US would ease banking sanctions that have paralyzed the Palestinian government for more than a year.

The Reuters wire story said that the State Department made clear it had not intention of lifting sanctions against the Hamas-led government but that it said that the US administration was considering whether to make it easier for funds to flow to accounts held by the PLO, which has signed interim peace deals.

The Jerusalem Post reported that operations at the Karni Crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel have been extended by at least five hours a day, following an Israeli-Palestinian agreement to expand traffic at the vital cargo passage for a trial period.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday Islamic Jihad denied reports that it had agreed to halt rocket attacks on Israel. Reports in some Arab newspapers claimed earlier that the Islamist organization had reached an agreement with PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas to stop the Qassam attacks.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that on Monday the UN Security Council decided to dispatch a special experts' team to investigate claims that weapons were being smuggled to Hizbullah militants in Southern Lebanon through the border with Syria. The Jerusalem Post said that Israel lauded the UN move. Yediot reported that on Wednesday the Council managed to adopt a decision based on intelligence provided by Israel, while condemning Israel for the manner in which it was obtained. Those developments took place in a debate about the smuggling of weapons from Syria to Hizbullah in Lebanon.

The Jerusalem Post printed a Jewish Telegraphic Agency story that on Monday Judge T.S. Ellis of the US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, threw out a motion to keep the trial of former AIPAC staffers Steve Rosen and Keith Weissman secret.

Ha'aretz cited statistics released by the National Insurance Institute -- the Israeli equivalent of the Social Security Administration -- that 66 civilians were killed in hostile actions

since last Independence Day, bringing the number of civilians killed in terror attacks since the state's establishment since the state's establishment to 1,635. The media reported that the number of fighters killed in Israel's wars and the pre-state period (since 1860) has reached 22,305.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post cited AP quoting Britain's National Union of Journalists as saying that it will continue working with its counterparts in Israel despite a vote on Friday by its annual meeting to boycott Israeli goods.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Knesset officials as saying on Wednesday that the Knesset will elect a new president by June 13 at the latest, even if President Moshe Katsav attempts to hold on to his post for as long as possible.

All media reported that on Wednesday State Attorney Eran Shendar announced that he will leave office in August, after completing

three years of his six-year term.

All media reported that on Wednesday President Bush paid tribute to Liviu Librescu, an Israeli professor who died on Monday while trying to save students during he shooting spree at Virginia Polytechnic Institute. The President made the remarks during a speech he delivered at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day.

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1. Secretary Gates to Israel, April 18-19, 2007:  
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Summary:  
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Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Everything we hear from Washington points to the conclusion that if Israel and the US are going to foil Iran's genocidal plans, there is an 18-month window of opportunity: the time left to Bush in the Oval Office."

Block Quotes:  
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"Bush Really Aims to Go Out Fighting"

Deputy Managing Editor Anshel Pfeffer wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (4/19): "Will there really be no [US] backing down [in Iraq]? Even if Bush, in the last quarter of his term, manages to go out fighting, how long will his successor stay the course? In this context, what was the purpose of Defense Secretary Robert Gates' visit here, the first visit by a US defense

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secretary in eight years? One Israeli newspaper raised the

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possibility that Gates is here to prepare the key Middle East players for an American pullout that would take place earlier than expected. However, Gates, at least in public, is singing a different tune. In Cairo, he said Iraq 'is a responsibility we will not abandon, a trust we will not break.' Whatever assurances Gates has brought with him, he reserved his press conference at the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv for taking aim at Syria. The failures and miscalculations, the quagmire in Iraq, the obduracy of the 'insurgents,' the pusillanimity of allies, and the loss of congressional support, none of it seems to have deflected Bush from his course. Everything we hear from Washington points to the conclusion that if Israel and the US are going to foil Iran's

genocidal plans, there is an 18-month window of opportunity: the time left to Bush in the Oval Office."

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2. Mideast:  
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## Summary:

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Olmert's desired to remain in power should not disqualify his diplomatic initiative.... But to do so, Olmert must lead the process, not look as though he were trailing behind outside initiatives."

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "To avoid the 'far too grave' situation of which [Palestinian Finance Minister Salam] Fayyad warns, the international community should politely do the opposite of what he advocates, and tighten the link between international aid and Palestinian movement toward proper governance and peace."

Conservative contributor Prof. Gabi Avital wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Israel is returning to Yitzhak Rabin's situation of as chief of staff -- before he understood the seriousness of the state of affairs -- only in much more difficult conditions."

Liberal columnist Dr. Gadi Taub wrote in Maariv (4/19): "The Ha'aretz newspaper ... has turned over the past 15 years into an almost monopoly of the anti-Zionist stance and the stronghold of those dealing with the delegitimization of Israel."

## Block Quotes:

### I. "Leading, Not Being Led"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (4/19): "On Wednesday Olmert signaled his desire to take part in a regional conference, attended by Saudi Arabia and the members of the International Quartet on the Middle East peace process. He hopes the conference will provide sponsorship and backing for talks with [PA Chairman Mahmoud] Abbas and put Israel on a joint front with the moderate Arab states against the Iranian threat.... Olmert's desired to remain in power should not disqualify his diplomatic initiative.... But to do so, Olmert must lead the process, not look as though he were trailing behind outside initiatives. His ostentatious hesitations regarding talks about the final status arrangement and his readiness to discuss only limited issues indicate that he is having difficulty deciding, or is afraid of undermining his coalition with Avigdor Lieberman. But the time for making a decision is approaching and the present attempt to revive the peace process must not be wasted on a photo opportunity and empty talks."

### II. "When Aid Hurts"

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (4/19): "In Washington on Monday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with Palestinian Authority Finance Minister Salam Fayyad in his 'private capacity,' the State Department said. Does this mean they spent the time looking at family photos? Officially, the US will have nothing to do with the Hamas-dominated Palestinian government, yet the US, with Israeli support, is providing some USD 59 million in non-lethal assistance to PA security forces that ostensibly are controlled by Chairman Mahmoud Abbas. The US also contributed substantially to the USD 1.2 billion in international assistance that flowed to the Palestinians in the year following Hamas's ascent to power. This represents an increase over the previous year and makes the Palestinians the highest per capita aid recipients in the world. Even this level of assistance, evidently, is not enough.... The Palestinian message ... is this: We need record levels of aid to avert a humanitarian crisis, but we are unwilling to abandon our commitments either to the means of terrorism or to the goal of Israel's complete destruction. The fact that the people asking for the money, Fayyad and Abbas, may personally disagree with this position does not change the nature of the government they represent.... Both Hamas and Fatah need to learn that the US and Europe will not continue to pour money into a dysfunctional economy suffering under from warring 'security services' and rampant corruption, not to mention the burden imposed by Israeli security measures necessitated by the constant terrorist activity.... Hamas's positions are not an academic matter; Hamas is preparing for war.... To avoid the 'far too grave' situation of which Fayyad warns, the

international community should politely do the opposite of what he advocates, and tighten the link between international aid and Palestinian movement toward proper governance and peace."

### III. "Nothing in Exchange"

Conservative contributor Prof. Gabi Avital wrote in the popular,

pluralist Maariv (4/19): "As a result of past withdrawals and of those planned for the impending future, Israel will remain with a tiny vital space, without water and land resources.... Israel will have to withstand an unbearable economic burden. At the same time, it will 'be forced' to relocate a quarter of a million Jews. Instead of envisaging the end of the conflict, one can see the rise of the three-headed snake -- the elimination of Israel, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Israelism. The Arab world views Israel as a dagger in the heart of the Arab nation. In other words, Israel is returning to Yitzhak Rabin's situation of as chief of staff -- before he understood the seriousness of the state of affairs -- only in much more difficult conditions."

### IV. "Brutality, Zionism, and Righteousness"

Liberal columnist Dr. Gadi Taub wrote in Maariv (4/19): "The Ha'aretz newspaper -- in particular its literary sections -- has turned over the past 15 years into an almost monopoly of the anti-Zionist stance and the stronghold of those dealing with the delegitimization of Israel. The representatives of five percent of research have become center stage in Ha'aretz. Post-Zionists survey themselves and their opponents. They create the impression that this small group constitutes most of the research. So what does one do when someone argues with that anti-Zionism? One ignores him.... A suspicion arises that many people are just afraid to open their mouths because the power of Ha'aretz is great and that it becomes more righteous, conceited, and violent."

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